

# “Proper Wedding Clothes”

Matthew 22:1-14

As we heard from Pastor Kolb in last week’s Gospel reading, Jesus told the parable of the tenants in the vineyard. In that parable, the landowner, God, did all of the real work preparing the vineyard, the Promised Land, for the people of Israel. He built the wall and the watchtower. He dug the winepress and planted the choicest vines. He then gave them the vineyard to use.

Because those first tenants had no respect for the landowner, His servants, or His Son, He **gave** the vineyard to new tenants. Being one of God’s people is a gift that we have done nothing to earn. He has given it to us.

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus explains our relationship to the kingdom of God once again. In the parable of the Wedding Banquet, once again, we see that it is God, the King, who does all of the work. He prepares the meal. The table is set. Everything is ready. He invites His guests, but none of them come. They paid no attention to the invitation. They did not have time for this King. They had “important” things to do. Between their work schedule and all of the other things that seem to eat up all the hours in a day, there was no time to go to this wedding banquet.

Just as the tenants in the vineyard had no respect for the landowner

or His servants or His Son, these royal subjects had no respect for their King, or His servants, or His Son. They exclude themselves from this feast, because they have “important” things to do. How many people do you know and love who look at our Lord’s invitation to the feast and say, “Thanks, but I have some ‘important’ things to do.”

The King makes the judgment that they are no longer worthy to come to the feast. So he casts judgment upon them and sends more servants throughout His kingdom to invite people from every street corner, both “bad and good”.

The King is not worried about his guest list being the beautiful, powerful, or influential A-list Hollywood types. He does not accept you or exclude you according to what you have done in your past or what you have to offer. He has invited you. He wants you to be in His presence. Even a person like Harvey Weinstein (speaking of A-list Hollywood types) who you may have heard about in the news this week; even someone with his track record of deviant and abusive behavior, if he were to repent and come to faith in Christ, he would be just as forgiven as you or me. Christ died for all the sins of the world.

Others may have designated you as “bad or good”, but your King has designated you as beloved and chosen. He wants you to come to His feast. The only way that you can end up outside of the wedding feast is if you determine that you have other more important things to do than to honor your King and His Son – or if you do not have the proper wedding clothes.

Now, when you were invited to the King’s banquet, the King gave you

the proper wedding clothes. The only way to be properly dressed for this wedding banquet is to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

In this parable, as Jesus is speaking to a Jewish audience, it is plain to see that the first people who were invited were the children of Israel who rejected God and His Son. And we understand that the second group which came to the banquet at the king's invitation are the Gentiles, us, and other people who the Jewish leadership considered to be the worthless dregs of society, those tax collectors and "sinners" with whom they would never associate. To do so was certainly beneath them.

That part of the parable is easy to understand. That theme shows up in a lot of Jesus' parables.

However, questions seem to arise when we read what happens to the one man who came to the banquet without the proper wedding clothes. The king had him tied hand and foot and thrown into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Christ the King had a man who accepted His invitation to the heavenly banquet thrown into Hell. How could that happen? Why did He do that?

The answer is very simple. In fact, I told you the answer earlier in the sermon. I stated just a minute ago: When a person is invited to the King's wedding banquet, the King **gives** each person the proper wedding clothes. The only way to be properly dressed for this wedding banquet is to be clothed in Christ's righteousness.

This fellow that came to the wedding banquet apparently did not think that he needed anything from the King. He figured that on his own he was fully prepared. He said to himself: "I have accepted His invitation. I think of

myself as a good citizen, of course the king will let me in. Besides, look at how I am dressed.”

The king made the wedding clothes available to all the guests. But this man was counting on his own righteousness, his own clothes, his own goodness making him acceptable for the wedding banquet.

We are those dregs of society, the poor miserable sinners, who have been made acceptable only by being clothed in the righteousness of Christ that God gave to us and put upon us. People who rely on their good citizenship or think that being one of God’s people is anything but a pure gift of grace are going to be gravely disappointed on the Last Day.

You are acceptable to God because at some point in your life, one of God’s servants, one of His people, told you about the invitation that God has extended to all people. And some servant of God brought you to God’s House to be clothed in Christ’s righteousness through the waters of Holy Baptism, and you were brought to hear God’s Word, and you were brought up in the faith to confirm the faith of your Baptism and receive the body and blood of the Son of God given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

The wedding garment that you received has made you welcome at the feast. God the Father has invited you to the wedding of His Son, Christ, as He is forever joined with His bride, the church. He has done all of the work. Everything has been prepared. He has invited you as one who is chosen and loved. And through the righteousness of His Son, He has reserved a place for you at the feast which has no end. Amen.